

Quick Steps for Healthy Cholesterol

Checklist for eating to lower your cholesterol

It's fairly easy to lower your blood cholesterol. Just eat more foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and cut down on high-fat ones, especially those high in saturated fats.

Here are some simple daily guidelines:

- Watch your caloric intake by eating a wide variety of foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Eat six or more servings of cereals, breads, pasta and other whole-grain products.
- Eat fish, poultry without skin and leaner cuts of meat instead of fatty ones.
- Eat nonfat or 1% milk dairy products rather than whole-milk dairy products.
- Enjoy 30-60 minutes of vigorous activities on most (or all) days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Checklist for getting started on an exercise program

- Wear comfortable clothes and sneakers or flat shoes with laces.
- Start slowly. Gradually build up to 30 minutes of activity on most or all days of the week (or whatever your doctor recommends). If you don't have a full 30 minutes, try two 15-minute sessions to meet your goal.
- Exercise at the same time of day so it becomes a regular part of your lifestyle. For example, you might walk every weekday from noon to 12:30 p.m.
- Drink a cup of water before, during and after exercising (but check with the doctor, because some people need to limit their fluid intake).
- Ask family and friends to join you. You'll be more likely to stick with it.
- Note your activities on a calendar or in a logbook. Write down the distance or length of time of your activity and how you feel after each session. If you miss a day, plan a make-up day or add 10-15 minutes to your next session.
- Use variety to keep your interest up. Walk one day, swim the next time, and then go for a bike ride on the weekend.
- Join an exercise group, health club or YMCA. Many churches and senior centers offer exercise programs, too. (Get your doctor's permission first.)
- Look for chances to be more active during the day. Walk the mall before shopping, choose a flight of stairs over an elevator, or take 10-15 minute walking breaks while watching TV or sitting for some other activity.
- Don't get discouraged if you stop for awhile. Get started again gradually and work up to your old pace.

- ☑ Don't engage in any activity that causes chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness or lightheadedness. If these happen, stop what you're doing right away.
- ☑ Don't exercise right after meals, when it's very hot or humid, or when you just don't feel up to it.

Checklist for making lifestyle changes

- ☑ Ask your physician or healthcare professional to help you with nutrition and physical activity advice.
- ☑ Learn to read food labels so you'll be able to tell how much fat, sodium and other ingredients are in your diet.
- ☑ Keep a diary of all your nutrition and physical activity efforts. When you see your successes written down, it will encourage you to continue with your good habits.
- ☑ If you don't feel like you're making progress, talk to your physician and ask why your progress is slow.
- ☑ If you're having trouble giving up smoking, ask your physician if you'd be able to take a smoking cessation drug to help.

Become an active participant in making treatment decisions and solving problems that keep you from following the doctor's orders.

Source: American Heart Association

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, County Governments Cooperating

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